

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 6, 2020

The Honorable Betsy DeVos
Secretary of Education
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Secretary DeVos:

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security, or CARES, Act established the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund which provides roughly \$14 billion to our institutions of higher education. It requires these schools to provide at least half of the funds they receive, or \$7 billion, to students through emergency financial aid grants. I am writing to learn what the Department is doing to ensure that this \$7 billion quickly gets into the hands of these students, who urgently need the assistance.

These funds are of particular importance because they provide the only opportunity to date for direct payments to many of our college students. In the CARES Act, Congress wrongly excluded students aged 17-24, who may be claimed as a dependent, from receiving the \$1,200 recovery rebates being provided for most Americans. On top of this, their parents have been excluded from receiving the \$500 recovery rebate being provided for most dependent children. This is despite the fact that most students have been sent home from campus at their own expense, and many have lost their jobs. As a result of leaving campus, many have also lost access to their school-provided food, housing, childcare, and other necessities.

While I believe Congress must fix this issue in our Phase 4 COVID-19 response bill, it is imperative that you act now to ensure that students swiftly receive the \$7 billion in emergency grants that Congress has already made available for them. To that end, please advise as to the following:

1. How will the \$14 billion be allocated among all of the institutions of higher education and to what extent is student need a part of that analysis?
2. What is the Department doing to expeditiously distribute these funds to schools?
3. What is the Department doing to ensure that schools prioritize getting these grants to students over other uses of the funds they receive?
4. What oversight will the Department conduct to ensure that schools distribute at least half of funds they receive to students?
5. What oversight will the Department conduct to ensure that schools distribute these grants in a manner that reflects the urgent need of their students?

While dramatic action is necessary to make access to college more affordable in America, there is a way to provide immediate relief to students struggling amidst this global pandemic. Your leadership at this moment is critical in helping to meet those needs. College students and their families eagerly await your response and action.

Sincerely,

Ted Deutch
MEMBER OF CONGRESS